

## **TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSE: CHALLENGES INVOLVED (WITH REFERENCE TO ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE)**

**MADHAVI LATHA**

Associate Professor in English, Computer Science and Information Technology, Majmaah university, AL Majmaah,  
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

### **ABSTRACT**

In the last decades, a language for specific purpose has experienced an extraordinary growth in its role as an applied linguistic discipline. This crucial development has been felt in different fields such as economy, industry, commerce, and basically in communications.

This paper makes a humble attempt to study the issues that make the profession challenging.

**KEYWORDS:** Globalization, ESP, Technology, EFL, Challenges

### **INTRODUCTION**

English has the privilege of being recognized as an international language. People learn it so that they can carry out their business transactions, communicate, understand and share the views and for many such reasons.

Globalization, Computer and Information technology have initiated new frontiers in the process of language learning and teaching process. There is a growing demand for specialized English such as business English, aviation, medicine, legal etc. Nergiz Kern rightly states that "People have always learned a language out of a special need and for special purpose." While Gatehouse (2001) identified three key reasons to the appearance of all ESP: the needs of a Brave New World (the end of World War II and the Oil Crisis in the 70s), a Revolution in Linguistics, and Focus on the Learner. This is the key reason for the development of English for Specific purposes.

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On one hand the varieties of English such as kings English, American English and so on, the other hand the varied reasons of learning the language makes Teaching English a hilarious task. Gramley and Pätzold [1992] point out that varieties of English are instances of registers which are classified mainly on the basis of field of discourse and purpose.

Teaching English for specific purposes also involves various issues that makes the profession of teaching English for specific purposes challenging. *EFL*, English as a foreign language, indicates the teaching of English in a non-English-speaking region. This is an added difficulty which the teacher needs to deal with in the teaching process

### **English as a Foreign Language**

*EFL*, English as a foreign language, indicates the teaching of English in a non-English-speaking region. Typically, EFL is learned either to pass exams as a necessary part of one's education, or for career progression while one works for an organization or business with an international focus. The difficulty is that there is a great difference between their native language and this new language they are learning; English. They find the difficulty basically in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary.

### **Mother Tongue Influence**

When the learners start learning English, which is not their native language they start comparing it with their native language, translate it to their native language and they find there is a difference in their native language and this new language, results in confusion. More over, they find the influence of their mother tongue in the learning process, for example in pronunciation: an Arabic pronounces "p" as "b", in grammar and vocabulary. This mother tongue influence needs to be neutralized in order to teach the new language English. The major difficulty is the learners persistent use of native language even in the class room.

### **First Generation Learners**

Home and local environment play a major role in the process of language learning. When the learner starts learning English which is not his native language, he happens to be the sole person in the family/locality to use this language. He as a first generation learner does not get enough chance to use this new language out side the class room, resulting in lack of practice. One needs to master all the four skills of language i.e, LSRW for fluency and accuracy. Being the first generation learner does not get enough opportunity to use English language with the other family members and people in the locality.

### **A Phonetic in Nature**

English is a phonetic in nature, there is lot of difference in the spoken and written form of the language. The relationship between English spelling and pronunciation does not follow the alphabetic principle consistently. This feature of the language adds to the difficulty in the teaching and learning process of the language.

### **Mixed Ability Learners**

Dealing with mixed ability learners is another challenge the teacher faces. When the learners are put into groups with different learning abilities, the slow learners find the fast learners to be dominating and find difficult to work with them, which makes them shrink and de-motivated, similarly the fast learners find difficulty in working with slow learners and this also de-motivates them. So dealing with mixed ability learners is a major challenge to be dealt by the teacher. These are few common difficulties that the language teacher faces in teaching English now let us see the challenges involved in teaching English for specific purposes.

### **Feature of Esp**

One of the characteristics or even a critical feature of ESP is that a course should involve specialist language (especially terminology) and content. In the majority of cases ESP teachers are not specialists in the students' professional fields.

### **Subject Matter**

The primary issue in ESP teaching is the struggle to master language and subject matter. Teachers find themselves having to teach with texts whose content they know little or nothing about. In addition, the ESP teacher happens to be the syllabus designer and is responsible for the teaching material and evaluation.

### **Designing the Syllabus**

The basic problem in designing a topic syllabus is that the ESP syllabus designer is not a specialist in the specific area (e.g. medicine, engineering), consequently he/she is not capable of deciding by himself/herself which topics to include in the syllabus to provide the required terminology. It is also very difficult for him/her to arrange the topics in the most

suitable order. Care should be taken that the ESP classes do not precede the topics in the special subjects, as the ESP teacher is not a subject specialist, this can lead to misunderstanding. Moreover, if a topic has already been discussed in the special subject, this motivates the learners and gives them confidence to communicate or discuss.

### **Selecting the Text and Adapting it**

Another problem is the text selection and adaptation. Not being a specialist in the specific area, the ESP teacher cannot decide by himself/herself how to adapt the text that the most important information in terms of subject matter will remain. The decision has to be made about the texts: on the one hand, the texts must not be too difficult, because neither the ESP teacher, nor the students have such a high level of professional knowledge; on the other hand, the text must not be too popular, because some learners have some confidence in their professional knowledge, and if the text is too easy for them in terms of subject matter, they tend to underestimate it in terms of language as well. In order to avoid such de-motivation, the text should contain some challenges which can activate the professional knowledge of the students. According to **Hamed Barjesteh and Fereshteh Shakeri** teachers should pay attention to all aspects of language (linguistic values, vocabulary, structures and grammatical exercises) as well as communicative aspects of language.

### **Lack of Cooperation Among the Teachers**

The lack of close cooperation and coordination between content lecturers and the designers of the study programmes, is a problem that still exists. Content lecturers should have more responsibility for introducing students and training them in a particular discipline. Developing home assignment or oral examination tasks together with content experts could be a great help for ESP teachers.

### **Learner Ability**

Students study ESP in the first semester. In the ESP course the students are expected to have at least an intermediate level of general English. In practice we have to deal with mixed-ability groups in terms of both level of language competence and professional competences. Some students are very good at English other students are very good at professional areas (i.e., know carrier content very well but do not possess good command of English).

### **Use of Technology in the Class Room**

The advent of the technological era has indelibly changed the face of education. When appropriately applied in classrooms, technology affects how instruction is delivered, how students access and process information, and how learning is assessed (Otero et al, 2005). Use of modern technology and computers is another challenge that the language teacher needs to deal with. Being a person who has mastered and dealt with arts now needs use to use the modern technology and computer in the class room. It is often found that the teachers and the learners end up giving importance to the technicalities rather than the content of the subject or the subject – matter which becomes a major aspect in the teaching process.

### **Need – Oriented/ Need Analysis**

Teaching ESP is aimed at developing students' skills of professional in communication in English depending on the area of their professional field. It means that such teaching should be connected to students' particular specialization. Brumfit (1984) defined the term "need analysis" as a process of determining and organizing the needs of learners in a specific language. Need analysis becomes vital in designing the course and teaching in order to meet with the specific needs of the learner. English for specific purpose includes specialized programmes which are designed to develop the communicative use of English in a specialized field of science, work or technology. According to Hayati (2008), the

arrangement of instruction is positional and it is based on fields and areas of learner's interest.

### **Designing Proper Class Room Activities**

Designing the class room activities is another aspect that needs a serious consideration. While designing the activities the teacher needs to consider the learners current level of knowledge in the subject, level of interest, ability of the learner, fast and slow learners, time allotment, assessment and other such things in order to have a proper impact of the activity and the lesson.

ESP teachers are to decide what kind of classroom activities are most suitable for the language learners with respect to their age, their present or future career development, their needs and their expectations regarding the learning process. However, it might be better to adopt what Tarone and Yule [1989] describe as an eclectic approach. It consists in picking procedures, exercises, and techniques from different methods.

### **Keeping up- Dated**

It is essential to keep up-dating about the latest developments and trends. It is often observed that after attaining a certain degree and entering a profession, people think that their objective is attained. But, one needs to start learning more. Reading up- dated and recent books and journals will keep them up- dated with the recent trends.

### **Professional Development**

Professional development must be considered very seriously. For this one needs to read up dated material, be it books or journals; write articles for publication and presentations and attend seminars/conferences and workshops are the things which would keep the person up dated and help in the professional development. These things keep involved with every new development in the field which enables him to learn the new things. A good professional always remains a learner. In other words learning should be continuous process for professional development.

These are some of the challenges faced in teaching English for Specific Purposes where English is a Foreign language.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This issue of Challenges in teaching English for specific purposes is a topic that needs to be considered. it is very important for lecturers in English for Specific Purposes ESP establish channels of communication with content lecturers and study program designers. Teachers should not try to teach the subject itself, but should strongly advise the students to discuss the matter with his/her subject teacher. A mixture of skill-based and topic-based approaches seem to be more relevant to the needs of the learning situation to satisfy the learning needs of the ESP course. However major question that needs consideration is: How can an ESP teacher cope with the issues he/she meets in his/her job?

Hutchinson and Waters provide part of the answer. ESP teachers do not need to learn specialist subject knowledge. They require three things only :

A positive attitude towards the ESP content ;

A knowledge of the fundamental principles of the subject area ;

An awareness of how much they probably already know .In other words, the ESP teacher should not become a teacher of the subject matter, but rather an interested student of the subject matter.

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**Technology integrated English for specific purpose lessons: read life language, tasks and tools for professionals, Nergiz Kern**

